



BLACK AFRICANS IN THE UK: INTEGRATION OR SEGREGATION?

Lavinia Mitton, School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent
and **Peter Aspinall**, Centre for Health Service Studies, University of Kent

The achievement of integration and a reduction in the social exclusion of ethnic minority communities are policy matters of major concern in the UK. This research showed that policy makers and service providers pursuing these aims must understand the support needs of people from different parts of sub-Saharan Africa at a fine level of detail: groupings such as 'Black African' used in official surveys are of limited usefulness. Although much ethnicity research has tended to view 'Black Africans' as a homogenous group, this study challenged this approach by conducting analysis taking account of country of birth and age at migration. Previously there was little comprehensive and up-to-date research that investigated patterns of integration among Black Africans in the UK.

Black Africans were chosen because, in demographic terms, their numbers are significant and growing. A total of 476,000 people of Black African ethnicity were recorded as being resident in England in the 2001 Census, but the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated the number of Black Africans in England and Wales to be 736,600 in mid-2007 (2001 Census, NOMIS website, accessed 26 March 2010; ONS, Population Estimates by Ethnic Group Mid-2007 (experimental) accessed 8 November 2010).

Two thirds of those in the 2001 Census came to the UK as migrants. When they settle in the UK, many Black Africans encounter significant language difficulties and substantial poverty, together with financial and other problems related to living in dislocated, transnational families. Prior to this study, there was strikingly little quantitative information on this group, possibly because Black Africans have not, on the whole, been seen as posing challenging dilemmas for policy makers despite their experience of disadvantage.

The study examined whether country of birth is a significant source of diversity within the Black African

grouping. For example, migrants from some African countries might be expected to have a high level of fluency in English, such as Nigerians and Zimbabweans, unlike Somalis and Congolese. In addition, reasons for migrating vary widely between countries, with a high proportion of recent arrivals from Zimbabwe fleeing a failing economy, a high proportion of Somalis, Congolese and Eritreans being refugees and a high proportion of Nigerians moving to study and work.

We also expected age at migration to be a significant source of diversity. For example, fluency in English was likely to be greater among the second generation who have been educated in the UK system, and a basic level English language competence at least is essential for integration. Further, Black Africans educated in the UK were more likely to have UK qualifications which are more likely to be recognised by employers than foreign qualifications. On the other hand, those who were child or adolescent migrants were likely to have had a disrupted education and experienced uncertainty about their future in the UK. Unaccompanied minors may have been lacking in social support.

Key findings

- The findings show that Black Africans from different countries of birth and of different ages when they arrived in the UK had different integration experiences when compared with Black African groups considered as an aggregate.
- Second generation Black Africans were more integrated than Black African migrants. The data confirmed that UK-born Black Africans had high levels of educational attainment. There was no evidence of this group having language difficulties in their education or in finding or holding down a job, which is an indication of integration. Some were thriving, were



in managerial or professional jobs and had been able to secure a mortgage.

- On the other hand, in other ways, second generation Black Africans faced disadvantage. Many were bringing up children alone. This would impact on the ability of parents to work and earn. Rates of unemployment were higher for UK-born Black Africans than among White British people, both males and females. Unemployment was especially acute for the 16-24 age group.
- Some Black Africans were struggling to translate their qualifications into managerial and professional jobs, as fewer Black Africans than White British workers holding degrees had a job at that level. Thus, whilst a good proportion of the second generation were accessing professional and managerial occupations, the data suggested polarisation, with many working in low-paying sectors or over-qualified for the jobs they were in.
- Zimbabweans and Nigerians had high levels of qualifications, employment and English language competence, all signs of social inclusion, and were more integrated than Black Africans in general.
- Somalis and Congolese were the most disadvantaged and least integrated of Black African groups, to a greater extent even than Bangladeshis on some measures. This is likely to be linked to their status as refugees.

Integration

The key question for this research was: 'To what extent have Black Africans integrated in terms of socio-economic position?' The New Labour Government saw integration as a process that contributes to the creation of a cohesive community, a policy agenda cemented by the establishment of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in 2006. However, integration remains a controversial matter, raising complex issues. Consequently, there was a need to develop indicator sets that could permit the evaluation of the extent of Black African integration. We hypothesised that the different aspects of integration investigated would present a picture of differing trends depending on the particular dimension of integration investigated.

Although the proposition of social integration is easy to understand, defining and measuring the concept present challenges. Our definition of integration was multidimensional, involving a number of indicators. We drew on indicators suggested by Castles *et al.* (2002), the Council of Europe (1997), the Home Office (2004) and Ager and Strang (2004), for example. Any one of these indicators taken alone is not a definitive measure of integration and there may be wide differences between the levels of integration achieved in these different dimensions.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the concept of integration, the indicators we used were found to provide a useful framework that aided thinking about the different dimensions of integration and by using a set of several

indicators a more comprehensive picture could be built up. Many definitions of integration stress English language proficiency, employment and advancement towards equality in education. Therefore, quantitative survey data were analysed to extract statistical information about these factors, and also about the additional indicators of occupation and housing tenure. Our aim was to select a suite of indicators that would produce an overall indicative current picture of Black Africans in the UK.

Data sources

Taking as case studies Black Africans born in Nigeria, Somalia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, and second generation Black Africans born in the UK, the research provided empirical statistical evidence on the extent to which members of these country-of-birth sub-groups had integrated compared to other Black Africans by using large-scale government social surveys and administrative data not previously analysed for this purpose. These were principally: (1) the 2003-2010 Labour Force Surveys (LFS); (2) the 2008 National Pupil Database (NPD); and (3) the 2001 Census. Clearly, these sources only reveal information about Black Africans who participated in the surveys: it is known that there are significant numbers (estimates vary widely) of undocumented migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in the UK. Nevertheless, the data provided valuable insights into the situation of the legally settled population.

Most previous research has been based on small-scale surveys. What research there has been on African sub-groups has focused more on some (e.g. Somalis) than others (e.g. Nigerians). By drawing on these social surveys, we provided statistical evidence that Black Africans in the UK diaspora are a very diverse group, with a wide range of needs and experience. Country of birth, religion, first language, age at migration, reason for migration and socio-economic circumstances all play a part in the integration process. Appreciating these distinctions is the first step to providing better support, improving their quality of life and helping their integration.

Geographical concentration

Whether people from similar backgrounds tend to live in clusters or are more dispersed is of interest because social and linguistic clusters can lead to social exclusion, but can also be a source of community support and therefore increase psychological well-being. Geographical concentration was studied using the NPD, which holds data on ethnicity and first language at the Lower Layer Super Output Area (LLSOA) level. Maps were created that showed the wards of London and districts of England where Black African pupils lived. Most pupils with Black African heritage lived in London. As Figure 1 shows, these pupils were concentrated around Peckham (Southwark) and Thamesmead (Greenwich and Bexley).

Similar maps were created for several African languages, and revealed substantial differences in clustering patterns. Shona-speaking Black Zimbabweans were found to be very

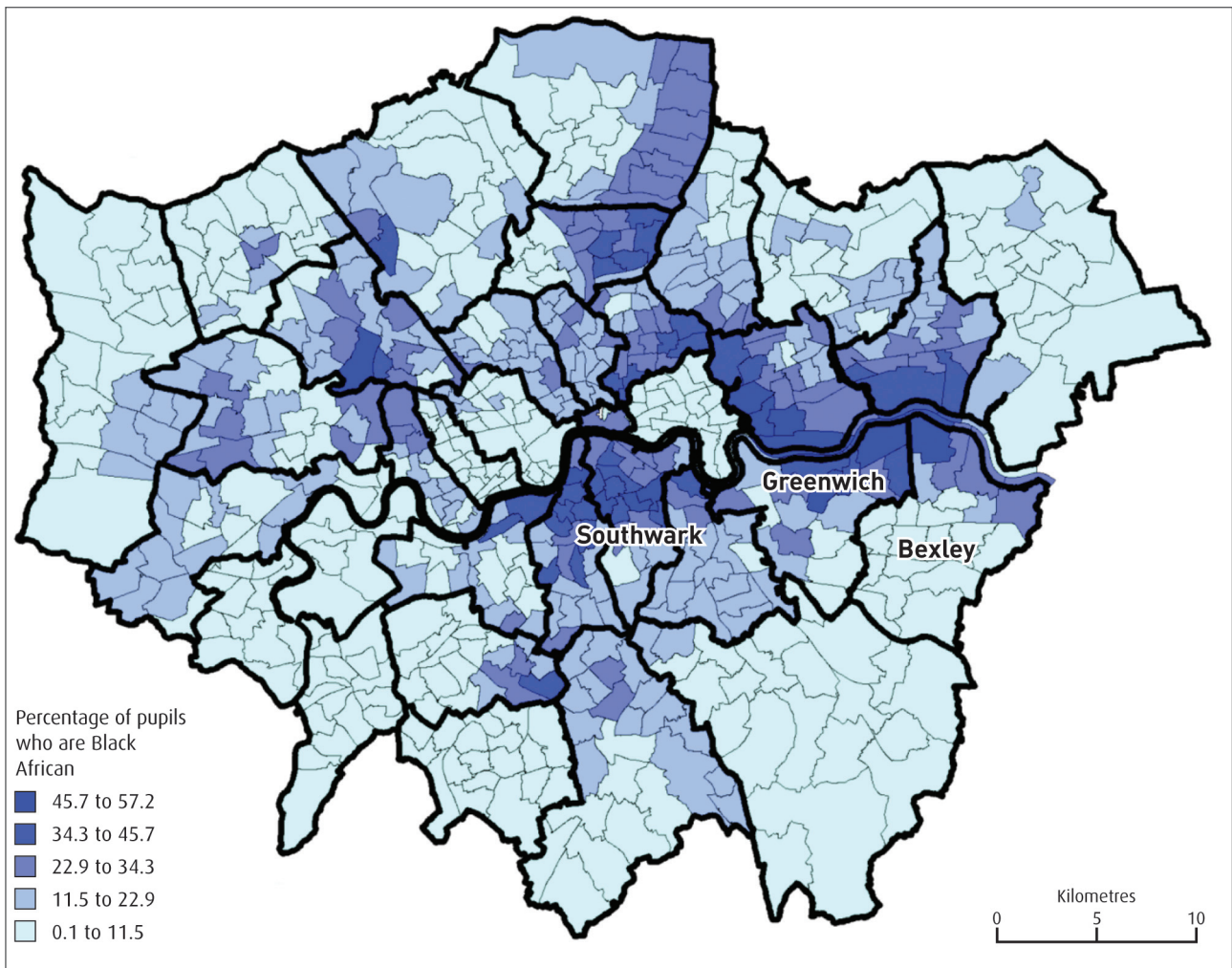


FIGURE 1. SCHOOL CHILDREN OF BLACK AFRICAN OR MIXED WHITE AND BLACK AFRICAN ETHNICITY, BY LONDON WARD, 2008

Source: 2008 National Pupil Database

geographically dispersed across England, in marked contrast to many other Black African migrant groups, which were strongly clustered and mainly in London. Somali speakers, for example, were highly clustered but were located in different parts of London to other African language groups, for example Yoruba (spoken in Nigeria) speakers.

The following criteria of integration were explored: English language fluency, educational attainment, employment, deprivation, and housing tenure and residential mobility.

English language fluency

Having at least a basic level English language competence is essential to integration because disparities in occupational achievement by ethnic group are related to fluency in English (Shields and Wheatley Price, 2002; Dustmann and Fabbri, 2003). Employers may reject migrants as employees because of their level of English, or place them in lower skilled positions than their experience merits (Hurstfield *et al.*, 2004). Lack of language skills can restrict job opportunities to a local enclave.

Previously, there was a paucity of data on Black Africans' fluency in English. The LFS data showed that many of those

who were born in Somalia faced significant language difficulties in their education or getting a job, as did some who migrated as adolescents (Table 1). On the other hand, Nigerians and Zimbabweans had very high levels English language fluency.

Country of birth	Language difficulty in education (%)	Language difficulty finding or keeping a job (%)	Sample size (unweighted base)
Somalia	14	17	376
Ghana	3	2	354
Zimbabwe	<1	<1	288
Nigeria	<1	<1	541

TABLE 1. BLACK AFRICANS AGED 16+ YEARS IN THE UK: LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY IN EDUCATION OR JOB, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Source: LFS June-Aug 2003, July-Sept 2006 and July-Sept 2009

Educational attainment

Educational attainment is an important contributor in the long term to upward social mobility and economic well-



being. We asked whether educational attainment of Black African pupils was related to ethnicity or first language by using the NPD. We found that pupils who spoke English as their first language achieved the most passes at grades A*-C at GCSE level.

Nigerians were found to have high levels of education and qualifications (Figure 2) and to be integrating well by these indicators, with Nigerian pupils achieving examination results close to those of the national average. Adult migrant Zimbabweans also had high levels of qualifications. However, the research also found that school children speaking Shona as their first language had a relatively low GCSE pass rate. Educational attainment — as measured by the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs — was very low for Congolese (28%) and Somali pupils (34%).

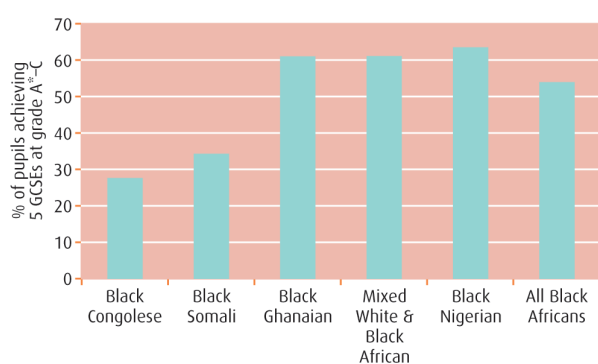


FIGURE 2. PROPORTION OF BLACK AFRICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN ACHIEVING 5+ GCSE PASSES AT GRADES A*-C, BY ETHNICITY

Source: 2008 National Pupil Database

Employment

Employment is the most researched aspect of integration. It has consistently been identified as a factor influencing

many issues, including economic independence, planning for the future, providing opportunity to develop language skills, offering self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance. It can present the chance to make contacts with people from the host country (unless new migrant workers are segregated in their workplaces) (Hickman *et al.*, 2008). On the other hand, unemployment can lead to poor physical and mental health (Bartley, 1994) and there is a strong link between being out of work and poverty (Gregg *et al.*, 1999; Nickell, 2004).

Factors affecting labour market participation include: racial discrimination, education, childcare responsibilities, geographical mobility, health, legal status, employer attitudes and experience in the UK labour market. Our study built on existing research by looking at employment, self-employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by country of birth and age at migration (Table 2). It also examined earnings levels and the occupations in which Black Africans were concentrated.

Levels of unemployment were relatively low for Nigerians, especially females. However, Nigerians faced obstacles to translating educational success into occupational success and the data suggested that Nigerian migrants were over-educated for the occupations they were in. In addition, their high levels of self-employment may have been the outcome of facing discrimination in the main labour market.

Levels of unemployment were also low for Zimbabweans, especially females. The data verified other researchers' findings based on small samples that health and social care were the main occupations of Zimbabweans.

The Black African migrant group with the highest unemployment rates was Somalis. Somali women had high levels of economic inactivity. A logistic regression analysis showed that unlike other Black Africans, an 'ethnic penalty' existed for Somalis even after other factors affecting employment such as language competency, health, age, work experience, religion and marital status had been

Sex	Country of birth	Economic activity			
		% In employment	% ILO unemployed	% Inactive	Total %
Male	Black African, UK born	69	6	25	100
	Ghana	82	7	11	100
	Nigeria	72	12	17	100
	Somalia	34	32	34	100
	Zimbabwe	64	14	22	100
	White British	82	6	12	100
Female	Black African, UK born	49	14	37	100
	Ghana	60	10	30	100
	Nigeria	60	12	28	100
	Somalia	14	12	74	100
	Zimbabwe	69	10	21	100
	White British	72	4	24	100

TABLE 2. ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF BLACK AFRICANS AND WHITE BRITISH PEOPLE AGED 16-59 IN THE UK, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Source: 2005-2009 LFS. The White British category refers to all those stating their ethnicity to be White British irrespective of their country of birth.



taken into account. Unemployment was also particularly high among those who had migrated as children. The study also found that Black Africans, especially Somalis, were paid less on average than White British people.

Deprivation

Disadvantage as measured by benefit receipt and area-based deprivation was found to vary by country of birth and first language. The proportion of Nigerians receiving the social security benefit Income Support was found to be no higher than among the White British population. Data on eligibility for free school meals (Figure 3) further indicated a community that was thriving to a greater extent than some other Black Africans, although those who spoke English as their first language were prospering somewhat more than those with children whose first language was Yoruba or Igbo.

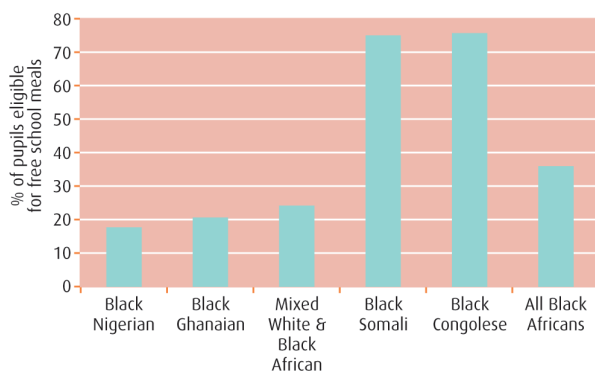


FIGURE 3. PROPORTION OF BLACK AFRICAN SCHOOL CHILDREN ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS, BY ETHNICITY

Source: 2008 National Pupil Database

Zimbabweans were also less deprived than Black Africans overall, as measured by receipt of social security and eligibility for free school meals. They lived in less deprived areas than Black Africans in general. On the other hand, pupils whose first language was Somali, Lingala (spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo) or French (an official language in many African countries) had the highest levels of eligibility for free school meals. Further, as many as half of Somalis and Congolese lived in the most deprived 20% of local areas.

Housing tenure and residential mobility

Housing is of relevance to issues of social cohesion because social tensions revolve around access to housing and the perception that 'immigrants' are given priority in the allocation of social housing. The cultural significance of home ownership in British society and the established use of tenure as a measure of disadvantage suggest that the level of home ownership is a valuable indicator of integration. However, whether being an owner-occupier, rather than renting, is to be interpreted as signalling a higher commitment to staying and integrating in Britain is a contested issue.

We found that Black Africans have very low levels of home ownership and instead are concentrated in privately rented accommodation. The high rates of private renting of housing could reflect a low level of commitment to settling in Britain or difficulties obtaining a mortgage.

Nigerians' relatively high levels of owner-occupation showed that they had had the opportunity to save and be accepted for a mortgage. However, Nigerians' housing conditions were much worse than those of white British people.

A striking finding was how frequently Black Africans move. Over 20% had moved in the 12 month period before the 2001 Census, with consequences for maintaining contacts with schools, medical and social services.

Conclusion

In summary, the innovative aspects of this research that contributed to knowledge were the use of multiple sources in an integrated way to build up a composite picture of Black Africans in Britain; the use of country of birth, length of time in UK, religion and language variables, where available, to explore the diversity of the 'Black African' grouping; and the secondary analysis of government social surveys and administrative data not previously analysed to distinguish Black Africans by country of birth and ethnic sub-groups.

The principal finding was that the socio-economic position of Black Africans in the UK varied by country of birth, but it should be noted that internal differences in country of birth groups are also important. The implication is that policy makers need to be flexible in responding to the varying support needs of different Black groups, taking into account country of birth.

Implications for policy and practice

The main needs of Nigerians and Zimbabweans are policies which enable them to find employment better commensurate with their level of qualifications. This might be achieved by promoting the skills of migrants to employers. Many Nigerians are not recent arrivals and their disadvantage highlights how integration is a long-term process and that relevant policies should not only focus on new arrivals.

However, in the context of limited resources, the priority should be targeting Somalis and Congolese because they are the most disadvantaged groups. One of their main needs is language support. Another area for concern is the low educational attainment of pupils from these ethnic backgrounds. Schools and social services need procedures in place to manage the relatively frequent residential moves made by Black Africans.

The data therefore convey a complex picture of Black African disadvantage and explain why a flexible and carefully-nuanced set of policy responses is required to meet the different problems and needs of groups from different countries of birth.

This research will inform policy and practice by enabling actions to be put in place that are sensitive to the diverse support needs of the Black African group. It will also help public services to secure support for a future integration strategy. This project could provide a basis for targeted interventions with respect to the particular communities investigated, be they dissemination of materials in community languages, targeted ESOL provision or outreach work. It will be particularly useful to London boroughs, other local authorities and those responsible for planning primary care in areas with a high proportion of Black Africans.

Future trends

Likely future trends will depend in part on the emerging economic and political situation in sub-Saharan Africa. With no end in sight to conflict in Somalia and DR Congo migration of refugees from these countries is likely to continue. Migration from countries from which refugees are not being accepted into the UK will also probably continue but via systems which enable highly qualified migrants to enter the UK. The Black African community will also grow significantly by natural increase, but with some demographic transition with respect to fertility rates, which are likely to vary across different country of birth groups.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the ESRC (grant number RES-163-25-0040). The Labour Force Survey Office was carried out by the Office for National Statistics and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, and was made available through the UK Data Archive, University of Essex, Colchester. Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland. The original data creators, depositors, copyright holders, funders of the surveys, and the UK Data Archive, bear no responsibility for the authors' further analysis or interpretation here.

References

- Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2004) *Indicators of Integration: Final Report, Development and Practice Report 28*, Home Office, London.
- Bartley, M. (1994) Unemployment and ill health: Understanding the relationship, *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 48(4): 333-337.
- Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E. and Vertovec, S. (2002) *Integration: Mapping the Field*, Home Office, London.
- Council of Europe (1997) *Measurement and Indicators of Integration*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- Dustmann, C. and Fabbri, F. (2003) Language proficiency and labour market performance of immigrants in the UK, *The Economic Journal*, 113(489): 695-717.
- Gregg, P., Harkness, S. and Machin, S. (1999) *Child Development and Family Income*, YPS for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.
- Hickman, M., Crowley, H. and Mai, N. (2008) *Immigration and Social Cohesion in the UK: The Rhythms and Realities of Everyday Life*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York.
- Home Office (2004) *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*, Home Office, London.
- Hurstfield, J., Pearson, R., Hooker, H., Ritchie, H. and Sinclair, A. (2004) *Employing Refugees: Some Organisations' Experiences*, Employability Forum, London.
- Nickell, S. (2004) Poverty and worklessness in Britain, *The Economic Journal*, 114(494): C1-C25.
- Shields, M.A. and Wheatley Price, S. (2002) The English language fluency and occupational success of ethnic minority immigrant men living in English metropolitan areas, *Journal of Population Economics*, 15(1): 137-160.

Contact details of the authors

Lavinia Mitton
School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research,
Cornwallis NE, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NF.
Email: l.mitton@kent.ac.uk

Peter Aspinall
Centre for Health Service Studies, George Allen Wing,
Cornwallis, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NF.
Email: P.J.Aspinall@kent.ac.uk